

From the Editor of *Museum Anthropology*

In its 31st year of publication, *Museum Anthropology* is the journal of the Council for Museum Anthropology. Like the research field with which it shares its name, the journal crosscuts the four subfields of (U.S.) anthropology, while engaging with neighboring fields such as museum studies, classical archaeology, folklore studies, and non-Western art history. Authors contributing to the journal span the globe while offering papers of similar breadth. Although the journal was founded within the intellectual and organizational contexts of North American museum anthropology, many of its present readers and authors are situated in very different national and regional traditions. As editor, I have endeavored to continue the internationalization of the journal.

Museum Anthropology publishes peer-reviewed research articles on material culture and in museum studies, including research on professional practice in museum settings and on the cross-cultural study of museums and related organizations, viewed both in historical and ethnographic terms. The journal also publishes commentaries and reviews of books, catalogs, exhibitions, and digital productions of interest to material culture and museum scholars. The new emphasis on the review of digital exhibitions, online databases, and similar projects is one hallmark of the journal in recent years (Jackson 2006).

Both material culture studies and museum studies are very active research fields at the present time. Each has experienced a productive period of renewal and reorientation, both in terms of scholarly focus and institutional arrangements. As the primary AAA venue focused on exploring such work, I have sought to highlight, in the pages of *Museum Anthropology*, articles and other content that illustrate the broader implications of current research in museum and material culture studies while also helping to lead nonspecialist readers into the wider conversations animating these interlocking fields.

Studies of material culture undertaken outside of the contexts of museum collections have had a prominent place in the journal's recent issues. Highlights here include a study by Aaron Glass (2008) of locally produced T-shirts among the Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl) of the Northwest Coast considered within the contexts of the Northwest Coast art world, local regimes of value, and the material culture studies' literature on clothing, circulation, and consumption. Emphasizing changes in style and economic context is Mary Thieme's (2007) recent study of pottery in the Mexican community of Santa María Atzompa. Additional ethnographic studies of material culture topics are slated for upcoming issues.

In recent issues, the history of anthropology in museum contexts has also been a prominent topic. Contributions along these lines include Nancy Parezo's (2006) study

of military collecting among the Navajo (Diné), Glass's (2006) examination of the role of museum collecting in the emergence of Northwest Coast art, Alison Petch's (2007) consideration of the role of scholars and projects associated with the Pitt Rivers Museum on the seminal publication *Notes and Queries in Anthropology*, and Sergei Kan's history of Lev Shternberg's work at the St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (2008).

Museums, as sites of exhibition and research as well as of cross-cultural exchange and social contact, remain at the center of the journal's agenda. Recent works considering the changing world of museums include Kimberly Christen's (2007) article highlighting the broader implications in the story of the emergence of an Aboriginal museum and cultural center in Tennant Creek, Northern Territory, Australia; Paul Liffman's (2007) exploration of Huichol involvement in Mexican and U.S. museum projects throughout the 20th century; and Arianna Fogelman's (2008) reconsideration of local community relevance at the Ghana National Museum. Of special interest to the field at large, particularly those concerned with the changing relationship between for-profit media firms and not-for-profit cultural institutions, is Richard Kurin's (2007) account of the controversial collaboration between Showtime Television and the Smithsonian Institution. Disciplinary and popular interest in the emergence of two new national museums of special interest to anthropology—the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington and the Musée du quai Branly in Paris—has also been reflected in the pages of the journal (Berlo and Jonaitis 2005; Jonaitis 2006; Naumann 2006).

I invite readers of the *American Anthropologist* to join the conversation on such issues ongoing in the pages of *Museum Anthropology*.

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From the Editor of *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*

PoLAR, also known as the *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, has been on the anthropological scene in one form or another since 1973. In its initial incarnation, the "Political Anthropology Letter," the publication aimed to "enhance communication among scholars interested in the anthropological study of politics" (1973:1). This focus was soon enlarged to include legal issues as well. From its early days as an occasional newsletter, *PoLAR* has grown to become a vibrant biannual publication. The journal has always taken an innovative approach. Its "Directions" section, for example, has regularly published unorthodox items such as course syllabi, grant proposals, and transcribed conversations. Our new editorial team at the University of Wisconsin has the good fortune to inherit the journal from a series of editors who have consistently maintained its early adventurous spirit, pushing boundaries and tackling questions that are central to the discipline of sociocultural anthropology as a whole.

PoLAR's symposium issues have become one trademark of the journal. In recent years, symposia have dealt with topics such as the environment, globalization, and sovereignty; ethics and consent in social science research; and human rights. In addition to periodic symposia, our upcoming issues will also feature more individually submitted articles. When these articles converge on similar questions, they will be presented in small "theme" sections (a format familiar from the *American Ethnologist*). Our Fall 2008 issue, for example, will have theme sections focused on (1) sovereignty and the role of "indigenous chiefs" in contemporary (and, increasingly, globalized) political struggles and (2) the anthropological study of individual legal tri-

als. An accompanying "Directions" section will present a transcribed conversation among researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds about methodological issues surrounding the study of trials.

PoLAR's new Book Review Editor, Katherine Bowie, has initiated a change to shorter book reviews of 800–1,500 words. This new format will permit the journal to cover more of the burgeoning literature at the intersection of politics, law, and anthropology. Katherine and I are planning a coordinated future issue of *PoLAR* in which articles and book reviews will jointly focus on interdisciplinary and methodological frontiers, with anthropologists commenting on scholarship from other disciplines and vice versa.

The Association for Political and Legal Anthropology (APLA) makes a point of reaching out to younger scholars, and this philosophy can be seen in *PoLAR*'s annual student essay contest. Reviewers and editors work with one or more student prize winners each year to help them in polishing their articles to prepare them for publication.

We invite interested colleagues to join the APLA–*PoLAR* community. Our editorial team is committed to publishing a range of scholarship reflecting the full array of issues and methods in our field. We subscribe to a broad definition of both politics and law. Research in many other corners of sociocultural anthropology has increasingly come to touch on traditional "political" issues such as the role of the state, the effects of global political processes, the political dimensions of knowledge, and so forth. We welcome this as an opportunity to create more points of collegial contact, and we offer the pages of *PoLAR* as a location in which the conversation can continue to grow.